

April 14, 2011

820 First Street NE, Suite 510
Washington, DC 20002

Tel: 202-408-1080
Fax: 202-408-1056

center@cbpp.org
www.cbpp.org

To: Chairman Davis

From: LaDonna Pavetti, Vice President, Family Income Support

Date: April 14, 2011

Subject: Response to questions from hearing on program integration and duplication

Please find below answers to questions for which I indicated I would provide additional information at the hearing on program integration and duplication.

What is the best path forward if we are trying to integrate programs rather than simply create more overhead in the long run?

The best starting point for charting a path forward is to lay out clear goals for the income support and related programs under the Subcommittee's jurisdiction. Some goals the committee might want to consider include the following:

- (1) Provide a safety net for families and individuals when they are unable to work, either because jobs are not available or because they are facing a personal or family crisis or short or long-term health or mental health issues that limit their ability to work.
- (2) Provide resources to help disadvantaged families and individuals who are either unemployed or underemployed to improve their employment prospects, thereby reducing their reliance on government assistance over the long-term.
- (3) Provide the resources necessary to protect children from harm and to ensure they are prepared to enter school ready to learn and to become the highly skilled workforce that the country needs to prosper.
- (4) Provide work supports for individuals who earn too little to meet their basic needs and whose employers do not provide access to basic benefits such as health insurance.

With clear goals to guide deliberations, it would then be possible to examine what contribution each program makes to achieving those goals. Adopting an evidence-based approach would provide a systematic framework for decision making. This would allow *all* programs to be considered on their merits and would not single out low-income programs for harsher treatment than programs targeted to other individuals or corporations. Evidence could be used to decide which programs are worthy of continuation as is, which show promise but need improvement, and which have failed to live up to their promise and should be eliminated.

It is also important to consider why programs that appear to be duplicative exist. Were they created because other programs were not meeting some portion of the target population's needs, or were they intentionally created to expand the range of programs available to individuals or families? Is the rationale that led to the creation of the array of seemingly similar programs still valid? What are the costs and benefits of integrating and/or consolidating similar programs? Who are the winners and losers?

What appears duplicative in theory may not be duplicative in practice. In addition, program duplication is not always bad. Sometimes, duplication helps to make sure that groups who would otherwise be left out receive services. Or, they provided a somewhat different set of services to a group with special needs, even though they may aim to achieve the same goals as more broadly targeted programs.